(a) whether Government have set up an empowered standing committee in order to take expeditious decisions on matters relating to export of foodgrains so as to accelerate the export of foodgrains;

(b) if so, who are the members of this committee;

(c) whether the committee would hold regular meetings for interaction with exporters and their representative bodies on the 10th of every month; and

(d) if so. to what extent setting up of this committee has been helpful in agricultural exports ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The said Committee consists of the following :

(i) Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution—Chairman.

(ii) Additional Secretary & Financial Adviser, Department of Food & Public Distribution—Member

(iii) Managing Director, Food Corporation of India-Member.

(iv) Managing Director, Central Warehousing Corporation-—Member.

(v) Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce—Member.

(vi) Joint Secretary (FCI), Department of Food & Public Distribution—Member.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Expeditious decisions taken by the Committee will remove the operational obstacles, boost exports and help liquidate the surplus stocks of foodgrains available at present.

Availability and import of soft oils

3948. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the total availability of popular soya, sunflower and mustard oil has come down since the last year; .

(b) if so, whether India imported 18.40 lakh tonnes of soft oils in 2000-2001;

(c) what were the total soft oils imported during the year 2001-2002;

(d) what are the main reasons for increasing imports of soft oils; and

(e) what efforts are being made to improve their production during 2002-2003 ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV) : (a) The total availability of a particular edible oil depends upon its production during that year. The total production of seeds of soyabean, Sunflower and Rapeseed Mustard during the last 2 years is as under :

Crop	Production	(000 tonnes)
Soyabean	7081.4	5272.9
Sunflower	683.6	733.0
Rapeseed-Mustard	5788.4	4207.1

(b) The total quantity of edible oils (fixed) including soft oils imported during 2000-01 is 39.75 lakh MT out of which the import of soft oil *viz.* crude soyabean oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil. cotton seed oil, refined rapeseed and sesamum oil is about 11.58 lakh MT.

(c) The import of soft oil mentioned in part (b) is about 13,l7 lakh MT during the period April to November, 2001.

(d) There is a gap in demand and indigenous production of edible oil. This-factor combined with low ruling international prices has led to heavy import of edible oils.

(e) The existing Centrally Sponsored Oilseeds Production Programme (OPP) which is under implementation in 28 States covering 408 selected districts to increase the production of oilseeds in the country, will continue, with some modifications during 2002-03 also. Under the scheme incentives by way of financial assistance are provided to the oilseed growers with a view to motivate them to take up the oilseed cultivation on a large scale.

Toning up of agricultural research

3949. SHRI ABANI ROY : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :